

# Space Cooperation With U.S. Not Affected by Ukraine, Russian Official Says

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August 19, 2014



Expedition 40 Soyuz Commander Maxim Suraev of the Russian Federal Space Agency, Roscosmos, bottom, Flight Engineer Reid Wiseman of NASA, center, and Flight Engineer Alexander Gerst of the European Space Agency, ESA, top, wave farewell prior to boarding the Soyuz TMA-13M rocket for launch, Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

A senior Russian space official has said cooperation with the U.S. on the International Space Station has not suffered from the Ukraine crisis, despite indications tensions may be imposing themselves on the otherwise resolutely apolitical space partnership.

"[The International Space Station, or ISS] is in absolutely no way affected [by the Ukraine conflict]," Vladimir Solovyev, the Federal Space Agency's head of the Russian segment of the space station, was cited Tuesday as saying by news agency Interfax.

"How could there be sanctions, when the ISS is an international project in which everyone is

tied to each other? The Russian side provides the station's transportation service," he added.

Though the ISS is a project of 15 nations — including European, Canadian and Japanese space officials — it is overseen by the U.S. and Russia.

Relations between the two countries have progressively cooled ever since Ukraine's pro-Kremlin president Viktor Yanukovych was ousted in February, resulting in a year-long import ban on food products from the West — including the U.S. — in retaliation for economic sanctions imposed on Russia.

With the ISS program set to expire in 2020, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said in May that Russia was not interested in prolonging its work with an "unreliable partner" such as the U.S.

Russia's ISS program manager, Alexei Krasnov, said last month Federal Space Agency Roscosmos had not yet received permission to confirm its continued participation because of the Ukrainian crisis, SpaceNews reported.

The vaunted U.S.-Russia space partnership has weathered a number of political storms since its inception in the late 1990s, including the 2008 Georgian crisis, when tensions between Washington and Moscow flared over Russia's brief invasion of its post-Soviet neighbor.

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